



Institute of
International
Education

A Brief History of

SENIOR INTERNATIONAL OFFICERS

ON U.S. HIGHER EDUCATION CAMPUSES



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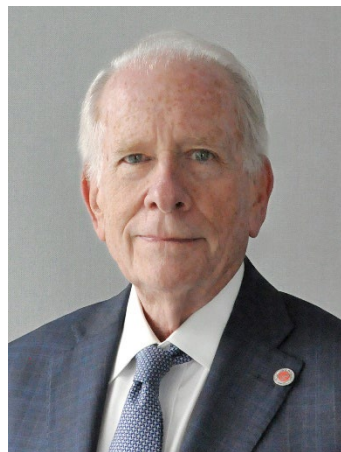
Acknowledgments

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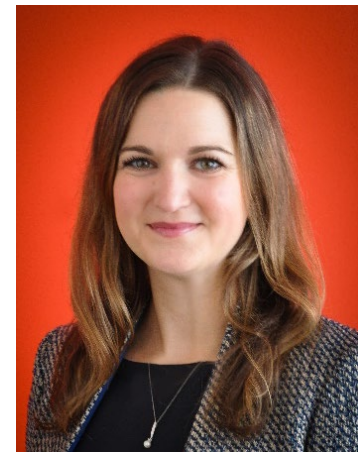
Our data collection and analysis were supported by Alice Rogers, Jodi Sanger, and Peggy Blumenthal. We thank them for their work on this project, supporting interviews with Senior International Officers (SIOs), conducting initial background research on SIOs on U.S. higher education campuses, and supporting the initial drafts of our findings. During the editing process, Lindsey Cunningham helped to finalize the research transcript and graphics. We also want to thank Ashley Holanda, Atif Toor, and Yoonsun Chung for the layout of the publication and Jonah Kokodyniak and Peggy Blumenthal for their reviews. Our work would not have been possible without this team.

Two hundred SIOs answered our survey, and more than a dozen spoke to us in interviews in the summer of 2020 amid the COVID-19 pandemic. We are grateful to them for taking the time in a challenging period to reflect on the SIO role, raising themes and reflections that are highly relevant to understanding their role, as well as vital for the future of international exchange.

Allan Goodman
Chief Executive Officer
Institute of International Education



Mirka Martel
Head of Research, Evaluation & Learning
Institute of International Education



Introduction

Today, it is hard to comprehend how U.S. universities and colleges could effectively manage their international engagements without a Senior International Officer (SIO), a position that has grown in scope and complexity over recent decades and continues to evolve as we enter a new era for international mobility and academic linkages. As crucial a role as SIOs play on U.S. campuses today, their job descriptions vary widely, as do their relationships with faculty and administrative leadership.

This Institute of International Education (IIE) publication captures the diversity of SIO roles, their varied accomplishments and challenges, and what tools and strategies are needed to make them most successful. Based on survey data from 200 SIOs from across the United States and subsequent in-depth interviews with more than a dozen diverse leaders in the SIO community, our findings reflect the complexities of SIO responsibilities and priorities. Collected during the COVID-19 pandemic, our research focuses on strategic factors and considerations for success as SIOs navigate the path forward. We hope that the findings from our research contribute to an important and wider discussion about the SIO role on U.S. higher education campuses and its need to continue to advocate for internationalization and academic exchange.

IIE's commitment to supporting the profession dates to 1936, when we founded a National Advisory Committee on the Adjustment of Foreign Students. This Committee addressed the needs of a growing number of Latin American students on U.S. campuses and many students from China and other countries in Asia, Europe, and the Middle East who could no longer return to their war-torn home countries. The Committee convened a series of conferences, beginning in 1942 in Cleveland, Ohio, where IIE joined forces with the U.S. Department of State, the U.S. Office of Education, and the Office of the Coordinator for Inter-American Affairs to host the first national conference on foreign student affairs.

Attendees at the Cleveland Conference understood that international students on their campuses were an important element of what is now known as "soft power diplomacy" and needed to be welcomed with respect, hospitality, and cultural sensitivity. IIE's Assistant Director at the time, Edgar Fisher, noted that these students, "when they return to their respective countries, come to occupy rather important positions of influence... they become the interpreters of ourselves to their people. That is an indication of the importance of our task." Fisher advocated

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for a relatively new and rare position to be added to all U.S. higher education institutions, the Foreign Student Adviser (FSA), which still exists on most U.S. campuses. Before 1940, only 13 universities in the United States had FSAs; by the conference, there were 40 such positions. With this addition, and the subsequent growth of international students on U.S. campuses, foreign student advising has become a highly sophisticated set of roles and services often reporting to the current-day SIO.

Fisher was confident that the FSA would prove invaluable by centralizing support for these students and lessening faculty and other administrators' burdens. He also knew that the federal government and private entities would benefit from having a single point of contact for all matters related to international students. This notion was so well received that by 1943, just a year after the Cleveland Conference, the number of campuses with FSAs grew from 40 to 285. To support FSAs in their evolving roles, IIE created the Counsel and Guidance Center (later called the Counseling Center) to provide information and training to FSAs that worked directly with students, offering services ranging from emergency funding to home hospitality by families across the United States.

By the end of World War II, new issues and challenges arose for U.S. campuses that continued to welcome growing numbers of international students and increasingly relied on FSAs to support their needs. Out of these developments grew the conviction that a new national organization was needed that would directly support this growing body of professionals: the National Association of Foreign Student Advisers (NAFSA). An IIE news release in 1948 noted that NAFSA's work would complement IIE's ongoing role, with the former supporting campus-based FSAs while IIE continued to facilitate academic exchanges and provide informational resources and exchange programs. When international mobility data was needed for submissions to the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) or the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), U.S. government officials turned to the annual *Open Doors Report on International Educational Exchange* collected by IIE, with support from the U.S. Department of State beginning in 1972.

For more than 70 years, the *Open Doors Report on International Educational Exchange* has published trends on international student and scholar mobility to the United States.

While international student management was increasingly centralized throughout the 20th century, U.S. study abroad programs remained highly decentralized on many campuses into the 1960s and after. Study abroad opportunities were managed most often by a mixture of faculty volunteers (who often had special relationships with colleagues and research institutes abroad), Assistant Deans with backgrounds in student advising (at times alumni of the U.S. Department

of State's William J. Fulbright Program), and other faculty members who themselves had come to the United States as international students and eventually became U.S. citizens and champions for international exchange.

Noteworthy individuals and positions stand out in their early commitment to international educational leadership. These include Joseph Neal at the University of Texas at Austin, one of the founding members of NAFSA and a founding member of the Association of International Education Administrators (AIEA) in 1982. AIEA was created with the intention and mission to support international education leaders specializing beyond the broader international education membership and goals of NAFSA. Other noteworthy early leaders included Josef Mestenhauer, Distinguished International Professor Emeritus at the University of Minnesota, and Barbara Burn, Associate Provost for International Programs at the University of Massachusetts. AIEA's centralization of this professional network provided a consolidated approach to supporting and helping define the SIO profession.

By the end of the 1990s, U.S. colleges and universities enrolled almost half a million international students and awarded academic credit for study abroad to more than 140,000 American students, according to *Open Doors* (IIE, 2000). During this time, some federal officials in immigration services began proposing that higher education institutions register their international students more closely to understand better their location and transfers from one institution to another, as well as their visa status. Federal policymakers began calling for the creation of a student exchange visitor information database (later known as SEVIS), with the primary function to centralize data on individuals in the United States on student visas. Initially seeing it as an unfunded federal mandate, many within the international education field opposed the system.

All that changed a few days into the fall term of the 2001/2002 academic year. The events of September 11, 2001 dramatically and fundamentally changed the nature of international student offices on U.S. campuses and the responsibilities of those in charge of them. Congress strongly supported the creation of SEVIS within the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), and U.S. campuses accepted their mandated role to report to DHS in real time the basic data on all enrolled international students. Many universities redeveloped their strategic plans, becoming more intentional about the role of international recruitment, enrollment, research collaboration, and reporting as part of strategies for enhanced internationalization and embracing globalization. Within this context, the role of SIOs grew even further, and the SIO role became more prevalent on U.S. higher education campuses.

SIO: Role in Review

According to AIEA, the term SIO is used to “describe individuals within an institution of higher education who are charged with leading and facilitating its comprehensive internationalization efforts” (AIEA, 2023). Though trends exist in the field, acknowledging differences and nuances is essential, particularly when looking at role variations. As AIEA indicates, the SIO role is “not the head of a singular functional area but are those leading comprehensive internationalization at their institution” (2023). The role is conceptualized by its priorities including international students and faculty on U.S. campuses; U.S. students and faculty studying, teaching, or conducting research abroad; and the promotion of internationalization priorities such as partnerships or research.

The SIO has come to embody a variety of responsibilities, including representing the university in several internationalization-related capacities, leading internal strategic thinking and planning around internationalization, and managing a multitude of components related to inbound and outbound students and programs. As reported by SIOs, top issues include international enrollment management and increasing/diversifying the number of students and programs for study abroad. Since 2020, SIOs and international educators have also been grappling with the ramifications of the COVID-19 pandemic on student and scholar mobility, enrollment, and funding.

Our interviews found that, while commonalities stand out, there is no single pathway to becoming an SIO. Most SIOs had an international experience that shaped them early in their careers. They may have been a high school exchange student, an international student to the United States, or developed a specialty and love for a particular country or region through their research and scholarship. In addition, a majority were interested in some form of academic administration and becoming part of the governance process at their college or university.

This is not to say that all current SIOs wanted to become an SIO or even thought this was an option. For some, the SIO role did not exist when they started to explore an administrative track. But what happened to all was an opportunity to help crystallize their institution’s commitment to campus internationalization and help shape the strategies for achieving it.

“I knew fairly early on that I wanted a career that combined teaching, research, and administration, and even when I got more deeply into my research specialty, this desire did not go away.”

Profile of SIOs at U.S. Higher Education Institutions

IIE's survey of SIOs focused on key topics regarding the role and its evolution: the individuals filling this role and the different types of SIOs at U.S. higher education institutions. The findings reflect 200 responses from SIOs across the United States. In addition, we complemented IIE's data with AIEA's findings from their SIO surveys administered throughout the past 15 years, beginning in 2006 and, most recently, in 2020. The combination of these surveys provided a full, longitudinal picture of the evolution of the SIO profile over time.

Categorization of the Profession

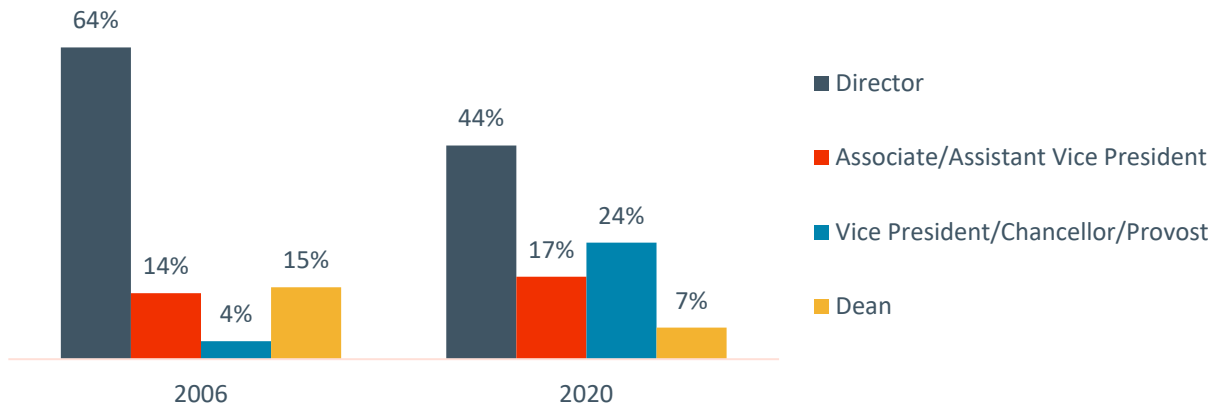
As noted in our Introduction, internationalization has become increasingly important for U.S. higher education institutions and their leadership. At the same time, SIOs have gained increasing responsibility at their universities and within the field. In 2017, ACE's *Mapping Internationalization* report noted that "SIOs occupy the number two slot when it comes to catalysts for internationalization—ahead of chief academic officers, faculty, and other administrative leaders" (ACE, 2017). This was confirmed in our survey responses and interviews with SIOs.

In 2011, AIEA's SIO survey reported that eight percent of SIOs had 15 or more years of experience in the role, and one-third of SIOs had been involved in international education for over 20 years (AIEA, 2011). By 2020, 16 percent of SIOs reported having more than 15 years of experience as an SIO, while over half of the reporting SIOs, or 55 percent, had over 20 years of international education experience (AIEA, 2020). While the expansion of SIOs over the last decade has likely led to more individuals with experience in the profession, the percentage of SIOs reporting extensive experience in the field speaks to the selection of senior experts to serve as SIOs.

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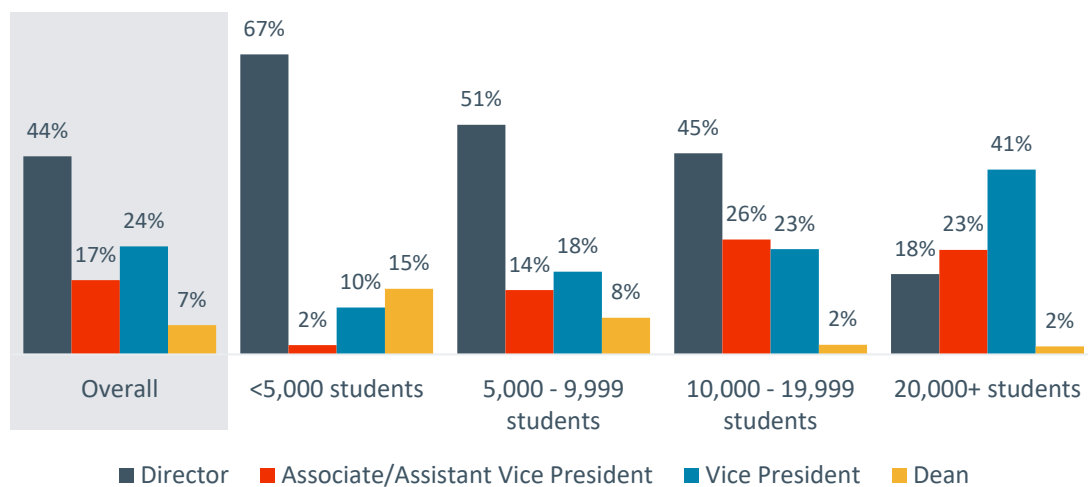
The SIO role has also evolved in the titles used to define the profession. In AIEA's 2006 survey, 64 percent of SIOs were Directors, 18 percent were Vice Presidents (or Vice Chancellor/Provost) and Assistant Vice Presidents, and 15 percent were Deans (Hoemeke et al., 2006). Our survey findings in 2020 noted that the titles of Vice President and Associate/Assistant Vice President had increased to 41 percent (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. SIO Titles, 2006 & 2020



The 2020 data varied significantly by institutional size. At smaller institutions (<5,000 students), SIOs were more likely to be Directors (see Figure 2). The trend for larger institutions to move from positioning the SIO as a Director to a Vice President or Associate/Assistant Vice President came through in the roles SIOs indicated preceded their current role. Forty percent of SIOs reported that the preceding role of their role was “Director.” Of those, 54 percent, predominantly at institutions with 10,000 or more students, now hold the title of Associate/Assistant Vice President, Chancellor, or Provost.

Figure 2. SIO Titles by Institution Size, 2020

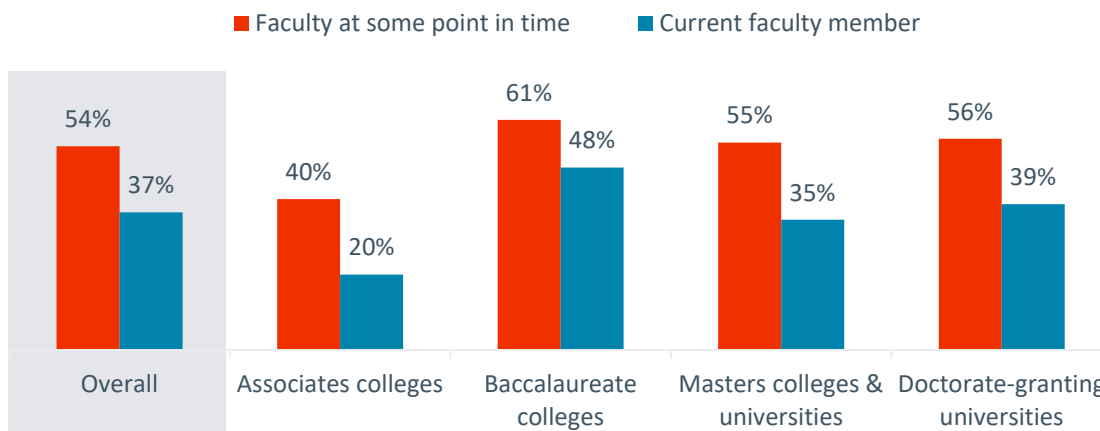


Administrative Focus

In a 2016 interview series with education leaders in the field, AIEA identified “increased senior-level coordination/advocacy for international initiatives on campus” and “increased professionalization of [international education] as a field” among critical elements contributing to the “arc of change” in international education (AIEA, 2016). Our findings indicate that part of this change has also been an increased focus on the SIO’s administrative tasks. In 2006, AIEA

found that 70 percent of SIOs held an academic appointment (Hoemeke et al., 2006). In 2020, a much smaller percentage of reporting SIOs (37%) were faculty members. Baccalaureate colleges stood out in that almost half of SIOs (48%) were current faculty members (see Figure 3). This finding suggests that SIOs at small and mid-size colleges may be more likely to split their time between academic and administrative duties, but that is less likely at other institutional types.

Figure 3. SIO Faculty Appointments by Institution Type, 2020

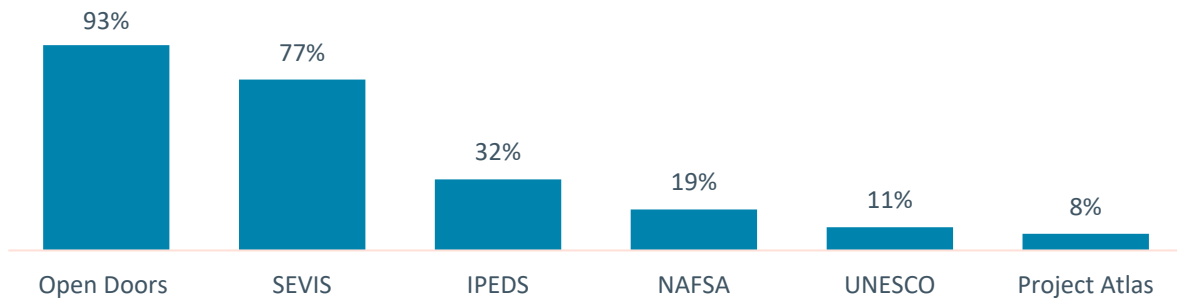


Levels of previous administrative experience among SIOs before their appointment varied in our interviews. Some SIOs had extensive backgrounds in administrative careers. For example, one SIO we interviewed served as an international student advisor and director of study abroad. In this instance, the SIO had years of experience in multiple administrative positions before becoming an SIO. Other SIOs, despite having less of an administrative background, intuited that there were aspects of administrative work they enjoyed. For example, one SIO who originally intended to become a faculty member stated that she enjoyed coming together with people and that she found that the SIO's administrative influence allowed her to help others. Still, other SIOs did not believe they possessed any interest in administrative work and were surprised by their aptitude for the position. One SIO remarked how entering the administrative field activated elements of his personality that he had not previously leveraged.

Data Collection and Use

SIOs noted the importance of collecting and reporting on data as one of the role's primary responsibilities. Most SIOs reported that gathering institutional data on international students and U.S. students studying abroad were two primary aspects of their role. SIOs leveraged this data for trend analyses, internal advocacy, benchmarking, and external reporting. Unsurprisingly, large majorities of SIOs reported using data from *Open Doors* (93%) and SEVIS (77%) on international student institutional trends (see Figure 4).

Figure 4. Data Used by SIOs, 2020



This finding speaks to the increased importance of data in decision-making and the increased role of data collection, analysis, and reporting as part of the SIO role. It also speaks to the increased responsibility that SIOs take on themselves to be data consumers and leverage data for all aspects of their role.

Additionally, there were several similarities between future objectives SIOs had for their position. For example, multiple SIOs stated that expanding internationalization efforts and the responsibilities of their positions at their schools is a priority for them. Multiple SIOs expressed the objective of making the SIO position more established and appreciated at their institutions. They currently feel that they must consistently advocate for keeping their elevated position, and they often struggle to become a priority during fundraising campaigns or budget considerations. Many SIOs hoped that in working to establish their position further, future SIOs would have more opportunities for funding and administrative influence.

Navigating the Campus and the Power of Strategic Relationships

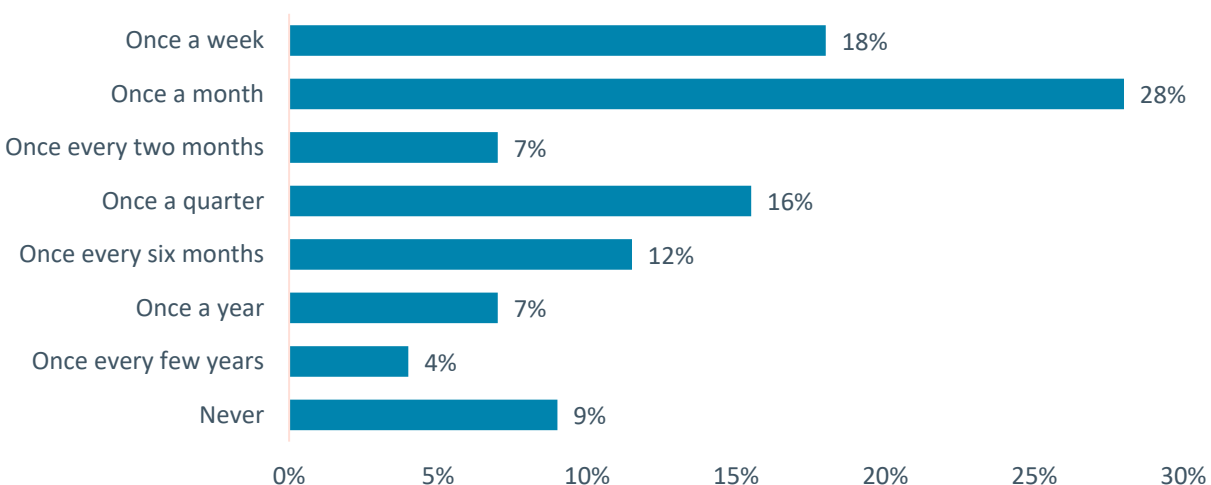
Although the relationships differ at each U.S. college and university, strategic connections between SIOs and their campus colleagues are imperative to promote internationalization effectively. This chapter discusses the findings related to SIO connections to their campus and university leadership, and effective practices for navigating relationships across departments and institutional priorities. We asked SIOs to share strategic connections they have made across their campus to succeed in their role.

Working with Leadership

SIOs reported a wide range of approaches to interactions with their college or university's leadership. In interviews, several SIOs stressed the importance of building a relationship with the University President and Provost. "They open doors and assure a seat at many tables ... the closer you get to the Chancellor's council, the better." SIOs noted that, although the relationship is important, they also had to be intentional about integrating their own goals into the university's goals. Several SIOs try to "connect to the leader's priorities and lead them to see how 'international' helps them achieve those."

Despite this, the actual meeting frequency with leadership varied (see Figure 5). Approximately 46 percent of SIOs said they met with their University Presidents weekly or monthly. In these cases, SIOs often noted that their leadership had insisted on this direct reporting relationship to signal that international education is an important part of their vision and among major leadership and institutional priorities.

Figure 5. Frequency of Meetings between SIOs and Their Leadership, 2020



Over half of SIOs reported meeting with their University Presidents less than once per month, including nine percent that had never had a meeting. When not part of the President’s cabinet or in regular communication, SIOs indicated that the interaction was often driven by an event or opportunity when SIO involvement would be necessary or desirable. And for some SIOs, the relationship with leadership would change from one administration to another, reflecting the leadership style of the President or Provost. Amid the COVID-19 pandemic, some SIOs indicated that establishing a close relationship with university leadership was imperative to managing the evolving crisis and its effects on international student and scholar mobility. SIOs indicated that, as a result, their role was often brought straight into leadership circles to help navigate the needs of international students and U.S. students abroad during the COVID-19 pandemic, emphasizing all students’ safety and security.

Amid the COVID-19 pandemic, some SIOs indicated that establishing a close relationship with university leadership was imperative to managing the evolving crisis and its effects on international student and scholar mobility.

Advisory Boards or Task Forces

Roughly half of SIOs (48%) reported that their university had an internal internationalization advisory board or task force. SIOs noted this as another opportunity to collaborate with others across campus to elevate areas of importance. Some SIOs also noted that a COVID-19 Emergency Task Force had been created on their campus. These boards or task forces have proved significant to SIOs seeking closer relationships with university leadership. SIOs explained that these advisory boards have helped them gain legitimacy and, at times, have helped push their agenda forward. As one SIO commented, “recommendations from working groups were vetted... so that they became seen as university-wide recommendations.” Participation in such a working group can ensure that an SIO will be able to share their perspectives and promote their constituents’ needs in a broader forum.

Finally, involving and collaborating with faculty members on advisory boards or councils can also increase collaboration with other departments. For example, one SIO noted an advisory council of faculty members selected by each school Dean to help guide the international office plans and activities: “It is a way of gaining buy-in and avoiding going down paths for which there will be little support.”

Strategic Connections across Campus Departments

In addition to working with their university leadership, SIOs also shared that working with Deans was another critical success element of SIOs. While leadership can push the internationalization agenda forward, Deans, their departments, and faculty implement the plan. To be successful, SIOs must work with these critical partners. One SIO noted that “if you do not have good relations with all of [the Deans] and stay in frequent touch, you cannot succeed even if you have the total ear of the President.” Deans, in turn, derive their legitimacy and power from having and demonstrating consistent and widespread support from their leading faculty members. “Getting faculty members close to their Deans and well-regarded helps enormously to assure that what we want to do internationally and to promote global educational initiatives will have support. Often, we are also seen by faculty members as helping them because they have their [own] international projects and priorities.”

A general takeaway from our interviews with SIOs was that collaboration with Deans was key to getting budget and faculty support. Regular discussions with Deans could help define the upper reaches of the internationalization strategy and a clear understanding of the challenges that Deans and their departments face. Understanding further what Deans need and what they can and cannot support enables SIOs to build the necessary elements for their approach and to gather the evidence or leverage to pursue their focus areas. No matter where a particular SIO reported, most stressed the importance of being “comfortable with a consensus-based process.” As part, “you also need to be good at building alliances, keeping them alive, and realizing when you need to build new ones.”

Priority Shifts amid COVID-19



For many SIOs, the COVID-19 pandemic offered new and complex challenges and opportunities. The challenge was to get a seat at the planning tables where the university's response to the outbreak and planning for the 2020-2021 academic year and the future were taking place. "We wanted to be sure that international projects and collaborations, foreign student enrollment, and the needs of existing international students were not forgotten in a rush to plan for the Fall. By being at the table, we can underscore how much the university benefits from and depends on international connections and students." Not all SIOs were considered essential personnel as summer task forces were composed. Their voices were often left out. One colleague observed that "come Fall when we know our international numbers, our colleagues will all begin to realize just how important our international connections and strategy are to our survival and standing."

To learn how the priorities of SIOs have changed amid COVID-19, we asked whether the tasks listed were of higher priority, the same priority, or lower priority than before. While AIEA's 2020 survey noted that 70 percent of SIO positions had not changed (AIEA, 2020), we found there were significant priority shifts. We grouped the priorities of SIOs into three broad areas. The first area covered the internal priorities of the SIO at the institution. These included collecting data, strategic planning, innovation, and learning. The second priority area was student-focused and related to SIOs' priorities regarding international students on campus and studying abroad. Finally, the third priority area was related to external factors. These included domestic or international partnerships, fundraising, and understanding and navigating policies that may affect the work of the SIO. It is important to note that SIOs were asked whether these priorities were increased, the same, or lower than before. As such, it is possible, and at times probable, that some of these priorities were just as important before and after COVID-19. As one SIO noted, their answers "marked as same priority level were already a high priority, so it is that there was no change due to COVID."

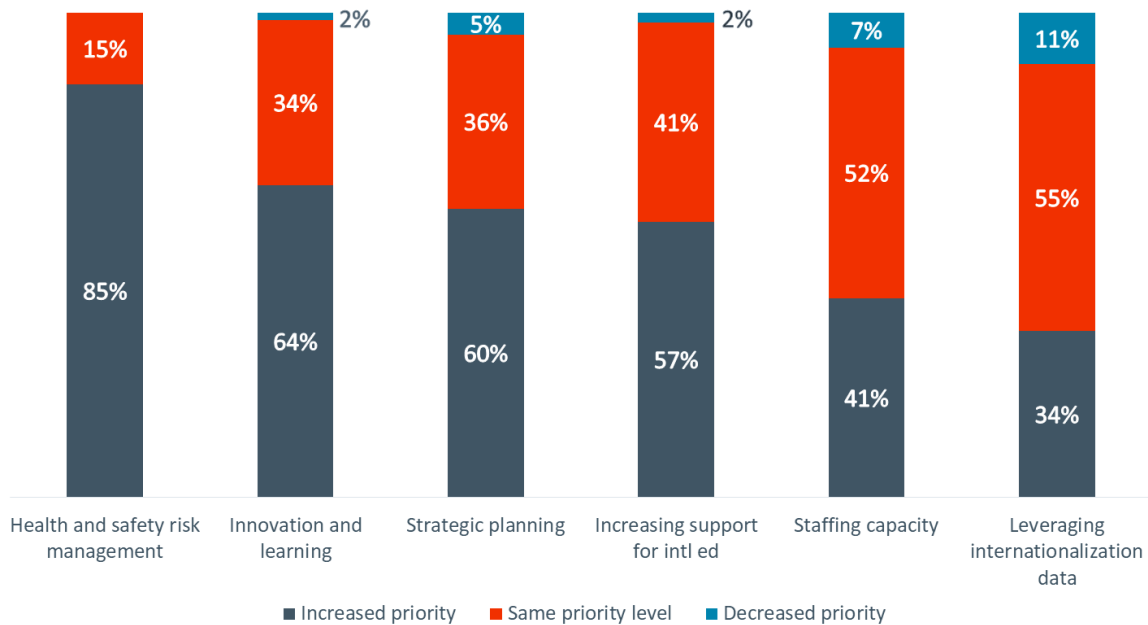
Internal Priorities on Campus

Most SIOs (85%) increased their focus on health and safety risk management in 2020 (see Figure 6). More than half of all SIOs (64%) noted increased priority for innovation and learning. Given the unprecedented nature of the COVID-19 pandemic, this emphasis on innovation was promising. The tasks that were ranked somewhat lower on the relative priority scale (staffing capacity and leveraging internationalization data) were not so because they were unimportant. Most SIOs noted that these were of the same priority as in the past, and those that noted higher priority often discussed the challenges these factors brought.

The findings also indicated that SIOs with less than 10 years of experience prioritized innovation more than SIOs with 10 or more years of experience (68% and 58%, respectively). This showed

that amid the COVID-19 pandemic, SIOs newer to their position were learning and innovating to continue their work.

Figure 6. Internal Priorities for SIOs, 2020



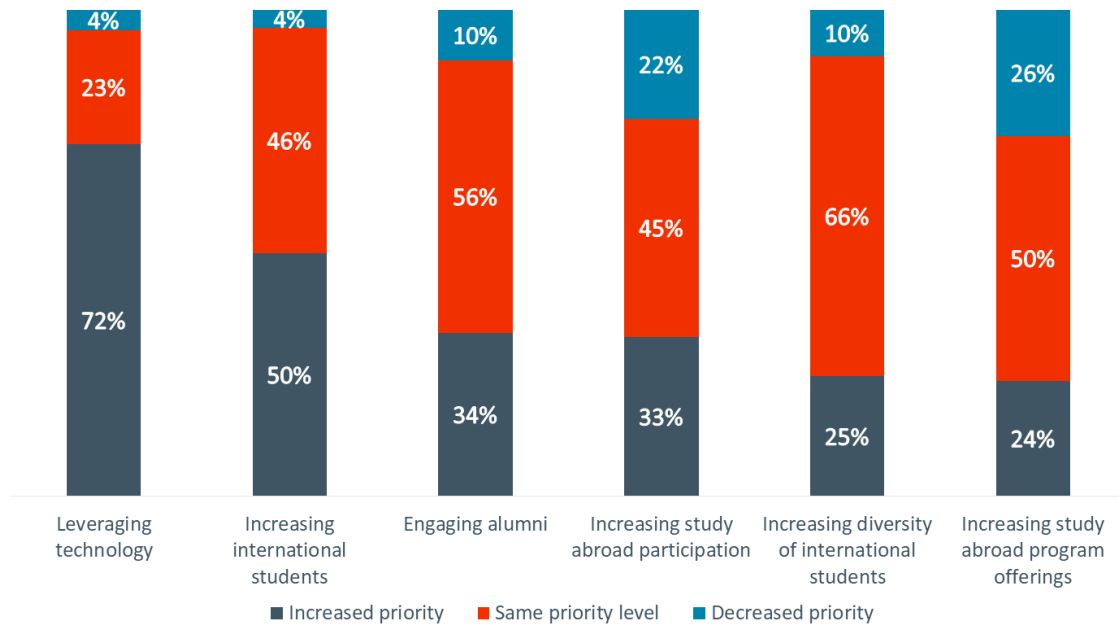
SIOs saw their roles change as they adapted to the new realities of the COVID-19 pandemic. Especially during the summer of 2020, the future of international travel was uncertain, and policies were shifting. This led university leadership to shift focus to domestic programs that seemed more feasible. At the same time, enrollment in international programs decreased. As a reaction to these external factors, SIOs felt that their “position is taking on more advocacy and public policy work in articulating a global strategic plan that fits the university’s strategic plan in a COVID-19 world.”

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Student-Related Priorities

Seventy-two percent of responding SIOs noted leveraging technology as a higher priority amid the COVID-19 pandemic (see Figure 7).

Figure 7. Student Priorities for SIOs, 2020



The focus on virtual global engagement was noted heavily for inbound and outbound virtual exchange. As one SIO noted, “We are putting more effort into internationalizing the curriculum and increasing virtual global engagement experiences.” SIOs were not only interested in the academic achievement of students enrolled in study abroad programs, but they were also “concerned about maintaining a sense of belonging for international students learning remotely from outside the U.S. and ensuring an outstanding, intellectually engaged and highly interactive (with peers and faculty) academic experience.”

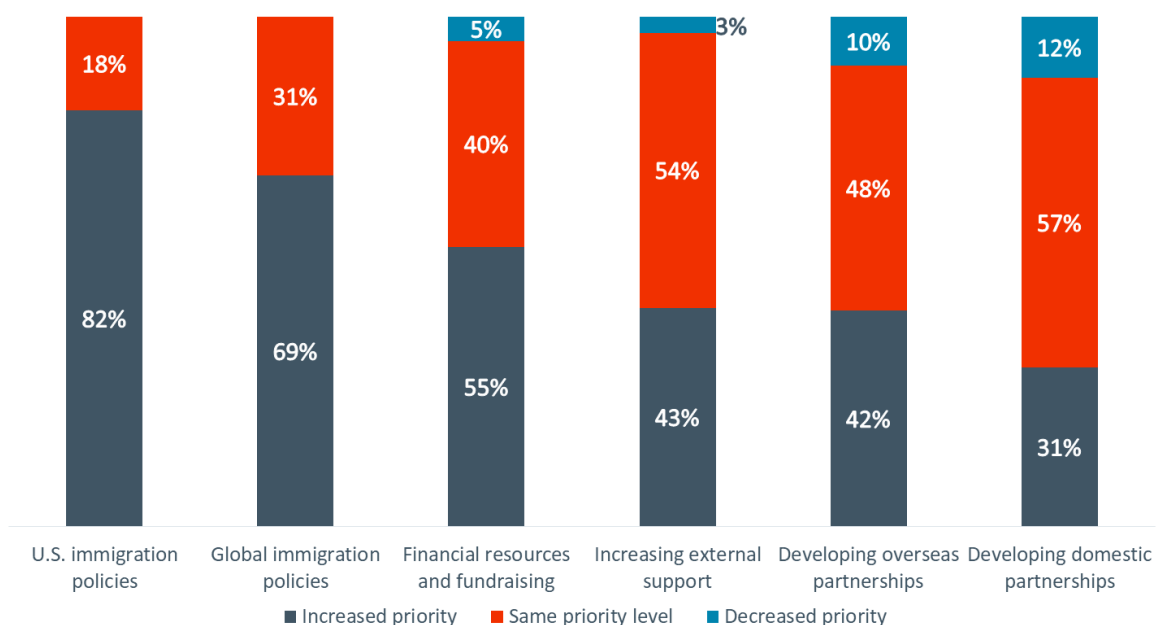
When asked about engaging alumni and increasing the diversity of international students, the majority of SIOs (56% and 66%, respectively) noted that these topics were the same priority as before the COVID-19 pandemic. It is important to note that increasing study abroad participation and increasing study abroad program offerings were a lower priority due to travel restrictions.

SIOs who had previously been or were currently faculty members tended to rank student-related factors as a higher priority. Faculty members specifically seemed concerned with engaging alumni. Forty percent of SIOs who were faculty members stated that engaging alumni was a higher priority. In comparison, only 26 percent of SIOs who had never been faculty stated that engaging alumni was an increased priority.

External Factors

Similar to the previous two sections, the findings related to external factors reflect the summer of 2020 when policies regarding COVID-19 and student and scholar mobility were swiftly changing. As a result, all SIOs noted equal or greater priority regarding U.S. and global immigration policies (see Figure 8). As noted by one SIO, the ability to navigate immigration policies had a ripple effect that impacted not only programming but support for internationalization. A learning from the time was that SIOs had to navigate a challenging and constantly evolving policy landscape: “The changing immigration policies have created challenges and confusion for students, faculty, and staff.”

Figure 8. External Priorities for SIOs, 2020



We asked SIOs to rate the relative importance of financial resources and fundraising as part of the external factors impacting their roles. However, many saw funding as an internal priority. The topic of developing partnerships, both overseas and domestic, had respondents indicating a similar level of priority as before the COVID-19 pandemic. Several SIOs also commented on strained partnerships with other countries due to differences in how other destination countries have focused on the COVID-19 pandemic.

COVID-19 in Context

Since the 2020 survey, SIOs have increasingly noted that many of the priorities identified and amplified during the COVID-19 pandemic remain the same. For many SIOs, the internal

priorities regarding internationalization were brought into sharper focus as efforts shifted to welcoming international students to campuses in 2021 and 2022 and sending U.S. students abroad for academic credit. As documented in more recent IIE surveys (2021 - 2022), student-centered priorities, particularly technology advances, have continued to be a high priority, and many institutions are implementing hybrid options for study (IIE, 2022). More campuses than before the pandemic are also considering options for internationalization at home. Finally, external factors continue to stretch SIOs in their role in advocating for international students and study abroad on campus. Since the COVID-19 pandemic started, more SIOs have been tasked to focus on international and domestic partnerships and additional funding sources to sustain international educational exchange (Lacy et al., 2022).

Looking Ahead

The increased numbers of international students on U.S. campuses, the growth in American students going abroad, and the expansion of international partnerships have brought increasing importance to the SIO role and some marked shifts in the SIO profile. Increases in the administrative positioning of the role, hiring of those with an educational background for the position, and a new and different focus on data among the newer SIO cohort are part of this larger change. The COVID-19 pandemic is the most recent catalyst that has forced the position to evolve into its latest iteration.

In looking ahead to the SIO role, several marked priorities emerged in our research. First, the role of the SIO will continue to serve a crucial role on campus in mapping the internationalization agenda. Amid the COVID-19 pandemic, SIOs became crucial advocates for continued internationalization in a shifting world and at a time when some questioned whether internationalization would continue. As noted by one SIO, “During and post-COVID-19, the biggest challenge is to keep internationalization a priority on campus, in light of all the other competing priorities and the financial challenges facing our and other universities.” Many SIOs have been successful in this regard, promoting an international future for their campus.

Second, our research indicates that relationships are critical for SIOs across the U.S. campus, starting with institutional leadership and continuing with Deans and campus departments, faculty, and alumni. A recommendation from several SIOs was to map out, within the SIO role on each campus, the colleagues and offices key to the SIO’s success. This will ensure that SIOs build bridges across campus and are included in decisions regarding their goals.

Third, health, safety, and emergency preparedness will continue to be a priority among SIOs as international mobility resumes. The COVID-19 pandemic affected how U.S. universities and colleges function, especially regarding interaction and focus on international students and scholars, and study abroad. Health and safety, and global and domestic immigration policies stand out as priorities that remain an area of focus for SIOs. Emergency protocols, procedures, and data from the COVID-19 pandemic should be leveraged to support effective policies.

Finally, the ethos of the SIO will continue to guide the profession. Common to all we interviewed was a career trajectory that, no matter where it started, contained a willingness to say “yes” to new ideas, approaches, and opportunities. SIOs regularly face tasks not part of an original academic or administrative career plan. And they step up. During the COVID-19 pandemic and as other campus realities arise, the willingness and enthusiasm of SIOs to be flexible and adaptable will ensure that this role continues and guides the field to further excellence and international cooperation.

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SIO of the Year Award

The IIE SIO of the Year Award was created in honor of IIE's Centennial in 2019 and is presented annually to an SIO who has developed a widely-embraced understanding of international education on their campus, infusing it into the mission and goals of their institution; has fostered multi-faceted, strategic international programming that has had significant impact across the institution; has built effective administrative structures, procedures, and policies for supporting international work across the institution; and continuously updates and expands their knowledge of the theories, methods, and best practices of academic internationalization.

Any Senior International Officer may be nominated for the IIE SIO of the Year Award. A Senior International Officer is defined as the individual who leads international initiatives at an institution of higher education. Eligible nominees who successfully submit an application form and accompanying documents will be reviewed by a distinguished panel. Nominees will be reviewed according to the following criteria:

- Has developed a widely-embraced understanding of international education and engagement as important to the mission and goals of their institution
- Has fostered multi-faceted, strategic international programming that has had significant impact across the institution
- Has built effective administrative structures, procedures, and policies for supporting international work across the institution
- Has made demonstrable, significant, and innovative contributions to the field of international education.
- Has demonstrated a commitment to mentoring new professionals and broaden access to the field of international education.
- Continuously updates and expands their knowledge of the theories, methods, and best practices of academic internationalization

For more information, please contact Sylvia Jons (sjons@iie.org).



SIO of the Year Awardees

2019:

Joanna Regulska

Vice Provost and Dean -
Global Affairs, University of
California, Davis

2020:

Cheryl Matherly

Vice President/Vice Provost,
International Affairs,
Lehigh University

2021:

Kalpen Trivedi

Vice Provost for Global Affairs,
Director, International Programs
Office, University of Massachusetts
Amherst

2022:

Thomas Buntru

Director of International Programs,
Universidad de Monterrey

Ahmad Ezzeddine

Vice President for Academic Student
Affairs and Global Engagement,
Wayne State University



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